

# Focus on

# Fluoride

*This newsletter is designed to share information on school fluoride programs with administrators, principals, and teachers. PLEASE ROUTE THIS newsletter to staff working with the school fluoride program.*

**Vol. 4, No. 2 September 1999**

## Dental Sealants Prevent Decay.....

### • What are dental sealants?

Dental sealants are thin plastic coatings applied to the chewing surfaces of the molars (back teeth). Most tooth decay in children and teens occurs in these surfaces. Sealants cover the chewing surfaces to prevent decay.



### • Which teeth are suitable for sealants?

Permanent molars are the most likely to benefit from sealant application. First molars usually come into the mouth when a child is about 6 years of age. Second molars appear at about age 12. It is best if the sealant is applied soon after the molars have erupted, before the teeth have a chance to decay. For that reason, children between the ages of 5 and 15 benefit most from sealants.

### • Will sealants replace fluoride?

No. Fluorides--such as those used in community water, toothpaste and mouthrinse--also help to prevent decay. Fluoride works best on the smooth surfaces of teeth. The chewing surfaces on the back teeth, however, have tiny grooves where decay often begins. Sealants keep germs out of the grooves by covering them with a safe plastic coating. Sealants and fluorides work together to prevent tooth decay.

**Sealants + Fluoride = Maximum Protection  
Against Cavities**

## Did You Know?

As a direct result of water fluoridation and over-the-counter fluoride products, around one-half of children entering the first grade today have never had a single cavity, compared with 36 percent in 1980 and 28 percent in the early 1970s.

## CIGARS— Hot Trend, Risky Habit

Cigar sales are up as movie stars and athletes boost the popularity of cigar smoking by making it look sophisticated and glamorous. However, the American Dental Association (ADA) warns that even occasional cigar smoking may contribute to serious oral health risks. Following is a list of cigar facts released by the ADA:

- ☠ Cigars are not a safe alternative to cigarettes.
- ☠ Cigar smokers can be at greater risk of death from cancer of the throat, mouth and esophagus than nonsmokers.
- ☠ Cigar smokers, many of whom smoke an average of eight cigars per week, often suffer from badly stained teeth and chronic bad breath.
- ☠ Cigar smokers who say they don't inhale are still at risk for oral and throat cancers. Many people do inhale cigars (sometimes unintentionally). Whether they inhale or not, the cigar comes in contact with the lips, tongue and mouth tissues. The cigar smoke permeates the mouth, nose and throat.
- ☠ Cigar smokers may have the same risk for emphysema as do cigarette smokers. A Danish study found no difference in risk of emphysema between current cigarette smokers and former smokers who switched to cigars or pipes. Their risk was reduced only if all tobacco consumption declined.
- ☠ Cigars were banned from restaurants long before cigarettes, mainly because of their foul odor. Cigars also produce secondhand smoke just like cigarettes.
- ☠ Research links cigars with cancers of the mouth and lungs, as well as with strokes, heart attacks and lung disease.

## Dental Web Sites for Students.....

*These sites have been compiled to help your students learn healthy oral care habits while having fun.*

[www.adha.org/kidstuff/index.html](http://www.adha.org/kidstuff/index.html)  
[www.ada.org/consumer/kids/index.html](http://www.ada.org/consumer/kids/index.html)  
[www.colgate.com](http://www.colgate.com)  
[www.mrreach.com/](http://www.mrreach.com/)  
[www.magicalos.com/](http://www.magicalos.com/)  
[http://tqjunior.advanced.org/5029/](http://http://tqjunior.advanced.org/5029/)  
[www.petdental.com/](http://www.petdental.com/)  
[www.dentalsite.com/patients/dentistrykids.html](http://www.dentalsite.com/patients/dentistrykids.html)  
[www.dentalstore.com/kids.html](http://www.dentalstore.com/kids.html)  
[www.deltadentalnj.com/kidsclub/index.html](http://www.deltadentalnj.com/kidsclub/index.html)



# Registered Dental Hygienists Help Safeguard Patients' Health.....

Registered dental hygienists are the only oral health care providers whose education specifically prepares them to provide preventive oral health care services that are critical to patients' overall health and wellness. As the experts in preventive treatment, dental hygienists are instrumental in teaching patients the proper way to care for their teeth and gums to prevent cavities and periodontal disease. Through early detection of warning signs, dental hygienists often serve as the first line of defense against these serious--sometimes deadly--diseases and disorders.

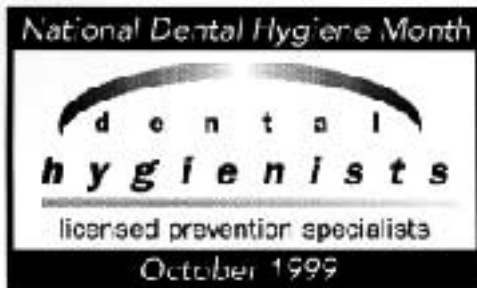
**Heart disease:** Cardiovascular disease affects 57 million people in the United States and kills almost a million people each year. Recent studies have shown that a patient with periodontal disease is twice as likely to develop heart disease as one without the disease.

**Diabetes:** Periodontal disease is one of the major complications of diabetes. In fact, approximately 95 percent of Americans who suffer from the condition also have periodontal disease. Research shows that people with periodontal disease have more difficulty controlling their blood sugar level, and severe periodontal disease can also increase the risk of developing diabetes.

**Respiratory ailments:** Diseases like pneumonia, bronchitis and emphysema affect millions of Americans annually. Bacteria in periodontal disease can travel from the mouth to the lungs and lower respiratory system where it can lead to or aggravate respiratory diseases, especially in patients who already suffer from other diseases or conditions.

**Premature and low birthweight babies:** Studies have found that expectant mothers with periodontal disease are seven times more likely to deliver babies who are premature and under weight than normal women who don't have the disease.

**Oral Cancer:** Oral cancer is more common than cancer in other parts of the body. It is typically caused by long-term use of tobacco and alcohol products. If caught early, it can be identified and treated successfully more than 90 percent of the time.



*For more information, write the  
American Dental Hygienists'  
Association, NDHM 1999  
444 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 3400  
Chicago, Ill. 60611-3999  
or  
visit their website at  
[www.adha.org](http://www.adha.org)*

## Tips for Teachers... FLUORIDE MOUTHRINSE

If a child has a bad cold and is unable to breathe through the nose, you may have the child rinse as long as possible and quietly spit in the cup or you may excuse them from rinsing that week.

If you have an idea to share, send it to:

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